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PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

PCT

NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION

(PCT Rule 61.2)

To:

Commissioner
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Office, PCT
2011 South Clark Place Room
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in its capacity as elected Office

Date of mailing (day/month/year) 22 November 2000 (22.11.00)	
International application No. PCT/EP00/02751	**Applicant's or agent's file reference** C/WZ15
International filing date (day/month/year) 22 March 2000 (22.03.00)	**Priority date** (day/month/year) 22 March 1999 (22.03.99)
Applicant RUTTEN, Mechteld, Geertruida, Maria	

1. The designated Office is hereby notified of its election made:

[X] in the demand filed with the International Preliminary Examining Authority on:

12 October 2000 (12.10.00)

[ ] in a notice effecting later election filed with the International Bureau on:

2. The election [X] was

[ ] was not

made before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date or, where Rule 32 applies, within the time limit under Rule 32.2(b).

The International Bureau of WIPO **34, chemin des Colombettes** **1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland**	Authorized officer S. Mafla
Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35	Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int. Jonal Application No
PCT/EP 00/02751

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 B65D75/58

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 B65D

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	EP 0 343 629 A (HAG GF) 29 November 1989 (1989-11-29) column 3, line 50 -column 4, line 41; figures	1-4,6-13
X	GB 620 354 A (SALFISBERG) page 3, line 8 - line 55; figures 1,5	1-8, 11-13
X	US 4 176 746 A (KOOI) 4 December 1979 (1979-12-04) column 5, line 7 - line 36; figures 3,4	1

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
12 July 2000	21/07/2000

Name and mailing address of the ISA	Authorized officer
European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL – 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31–70) 340–2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31–70) 340–3016	Newell, P

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1992)

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

Inte onal Application No
PCT/EP 00/02751

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
EP 343629 A	29-11-1989	DE 3818111 A	30-11-1989
		DE 8816810 U	16-08-1990
		DK 257289 A	28-11-1989
		FI 892145 A	28-11-1989
		NO 892135 A	28-11-1989
GB 620354 A		NONE	
US 4176746 A	04-12-1979	NONE	

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 18 and Rules 43 and 44)

Applicant's or agent's file reference	**FOR FURTHER ACTION**	see Notification of Transmittal of International Search Report (Form PCT/ISA/220) as well as, where applicable, item 5 below.
V/WZ15		
International application No.	International filing date *(day/month/year)*	(Earliest) Priority Date *(day/month/year)*
PCT/EP 00/ 02751	22/03/2000	22/03/1999
Applicant		
MARS B.V. et al.		

This International Search Report has been prepared by this International Searching Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 18. A copy is being transmitted to the International Bureau.

This International Search Report consists of a total of 2 sheets.

[X] It is also accompanied by a copy of each prior art document cited in this report.

1. **Basis of the report**

   a. With regard to the **language,** the international search was carried out on the basis of the international application in the language in which it was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

   [ ] the international search was carried out on the basis of a translation of the international application furnished to this Authority (Rule 23.1(b)).

   b. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international search was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing :

   [ ] contained in the international application in written form.

   [ ] filed together with the international application in computer readable form.

   [ ] furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.

   [ ] furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readble form.

   [ ] the statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.

   [ ] the statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished

2. [ ] **Certain claims were found unsearchable** (See Box I).

3. [ ] **Unity of invention is lacking** (see Box II).

4. With regard to the **title,**

   [ ] the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.

   [X] the text has been established by this Authority to read as follows:

   Easy-open peel seal for flexible package

5. With regard to the **abstract,**

   [X] the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.

   [ ] the text has been established, according to Rule 38.2(b), by this Authority as it appears in Box III. The applicant may, within one month from the date of mailing of this international search report, submit comments to this Authority.

6. The figure of the **drawings** to be published with the abstract is Figure No. 3

   [X] as suggested by the applicant.

   [ ] because the applicant failed to suggest a figure.

   [ ] because this figure better characterizes the invention.

   [ ] None of the figures.

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International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 7 : B65D 75/58 — A1

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(71) Applicant *(for all designated States except US)*: MARS B.V. [NL/NL]; Taylorweg 5, NL–5466 AE Veghel (NL).

(72) Inventor; and
(75) Inventor/Applicant *(for US only)*: RUTTEN, Mechteld, Geertruida, Maria [NL/NL]; Brugstraat 5, NL–5211 VS 's–Hertogenbosch (NL).

(74) Agents: LOUËT FEISSER, Arnold et al.; Arnold & Siedsma, Sweelinckplein 1, NL–2517 GK Den Haag (NL).

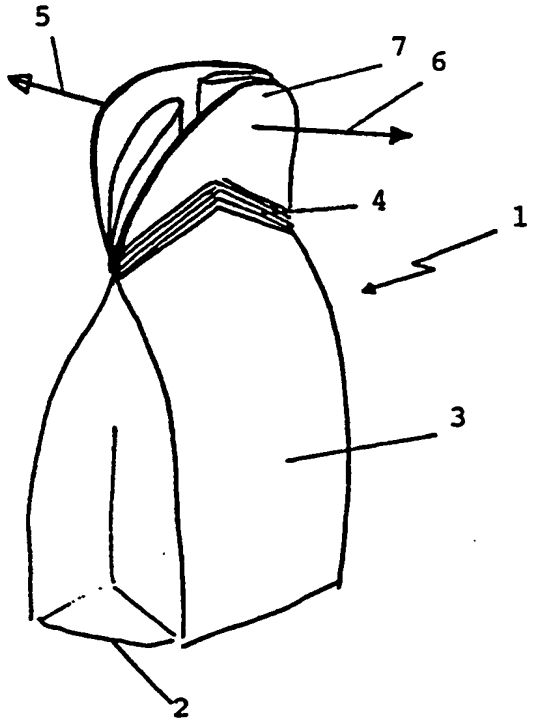
(81) Designated States: AU, CA, US, European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE).

Published
With international search report.
Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.

(54) Title: EASY–OPEN PEEL SEAL FOR FLEXIBLE PACKAGE

(57) Abstract

A package of a flexible material which has been formed into an envelope (1), which package comprises an access opening, which is closed by means of a seal (4) which has been formed by bonding together two or more contacting layers of the material in a particular area. The package can be opened by pulling apart two bonded–together layers of material in said area. To that end the flexible material is provided with an engagement (7) portion and the portion of the seal (4) area that is positioned closest to said engagement portion (7) has a convex edge.



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EASY-OPEN PEEL SEAL FOR FLEXIBLE PACKAGE

The invention relates to a package of a flexible material which has been formed into an envelope, which package comprises an access opening, which is closed by means of a seal which has been formed by bonding together two or more contacting layers of the material in a particular area, which package can be opened by pulling apart two bonded layers of material in said area, to which end the flexible material is provided with an engagement portion. The package usually consists of one or more layers of paper and/or plastic material, which form a container which is sealed at least at one end thereof for the purpose of being opened at that end. The seal has been formed by bonding together areas of the flexible material by heating said areas and/or interpolating an adhesive, so that an airtight seal is obtained. Usually, such a seal forms a straight, elongated strip.

A package of this kind may be used for packaging sweets or candy bars, for example. The package must be easy to open, for example by pulling loose the seal, with the package functioning as a container for the sweets after being opened, from which the sweets can be removed by the user.

The drawback of the known package is that a great deal of force must be exerted for pulling apart the bonded layers of material, and that uncontrolled movements resulting from said great exertion of force may lead to the contents falling out of the package, or that the package, once it has been opened, is no longer suitable for use as a container, for example because it is torn.

The objective of the invention is to provide a package which is easy to open with less force, and/or wherein the bonded layers can be pulled apart in a controlled manner.

In order to accomplish that objective, the portion of the seal area that is positioned closest to the engagement portion has a convex edge. As a result of this, the layers of material will first be pulled apart in a small part of the seal area when the seal is pulled loose, which requires relatively little force. Once said pulling loose has commenced, it can be continued in a larger part of the aforesaid area. Generally, the engagement portion can be recognized by the shape of and/or the print on the package.

In one embodiment, said convex edge comprises two substantially straight edge portions, which include an angle with each other. Preferably, said edge portions bound a V-shaped area. As a result of this arrangement, opening of the seal will commence in the point of the V-shape, using a minimum pulling force, and will then continue in the legs of the V-shape. In another embodiment, the convex edge is substantially curved. The remaining portion of the seal may extend in the form of a straight strip.

In one embodiment, said area has substantially the same width along its length, as a result of which the force required for opening the package will remain constant during said opening, which helps to have said opening take place in a controlled manner. In another embodiment, said area is wider near the edges of the access opening than near the engagement portion. This reduces the risk of the package being torn beyond the edges of the access opening upon being opened.

Preferably, the seal is substantially in the form of a stripe, in particular a V-stripe, also called a chevron.

As a result of this, the access opening extends over a limited area, which makes the package especially suitable for use as a bag-like container after opening.

The flexible material may extend beyond said area, seen from the packaged product, and said engagement portion is thereby positioned in said further extending material. This makes for easy opening of the package, since it will be immediately apparent to the user that he must pull at the "flaps" thus formed, which can easily be moved apart. Preferably, the flaps are made up of a continuous strip, which extends beyond the seal, thus reducing the risk of the package being torn beyond the access opening.

In another embodiment, said engagement portion is positioned in the part of the package which is intended for enveloping the packaged product. This makes it possible to realise a seal while using a minimum amount of flexible material. Sufficient flexible material must be present at the location of the engagement portion, however, in order to enable the user to take hold of it with his fingers.

Preferably, the package substantially consists of one piece of flexible material. Thus, a package which is easy to produce and which provides a strong container after opening is obtained.

The invention also relates to a method for producing a package of a flexible material, wherein two or more contacting layers of the material are bonded together in a particular area, in such a manner that the package can be opened by pulling apart two bonded layers of material in said area by engaging said flexible material at the location of an engagement portion, wherein the part of the area located closest to said engagement portion is provided with a convex edge.

The invention also relates to a method for packaging a product, wherein the product is enveloped with a flexible material, wherein two or more contacting layers of the material are bonded together in a particular area, in such a manner that the package can be opened by pulling apart two bonded layers of material in said area by engaging said flexible material at the location of an engagement portion, wherein the part of the area located closest to said engagement portion is provided with a convex edge.

Furthermore, the invention relates to a method for opening a package of a flexible material, which package is closed by means of a seal which has been formed by bonding together two or more contacting layers of the material in a particular area, wherein the bonded material is pulled loose, starting at a portion of the area where the edge of said area has a convex shape.

Hereafter a number of embodiments of a package will be described by way of illustration, wherein reference is made to the drawing, in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a package according to prior art;
Figure 2 is a side view of the package according to Figure 1;
Figure 3 is a perspective view of a package according to the invention;
Figure 4 is a perspective view of an embodiment; and
Figures 5 - 10 are front views of embodiments.

The drawings are essentially schematic representations, wherein like parts are indicated by the same numerals.

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a package which contains sweets or candy bars, which are packaged in an

airtight manner therein. Figure 2 shows the same container in side view. The package consists of container 1 of plastic foil, comprising a bottom 2, four upright walls 3 and a seal 4. Seal 4 is formed by folding the upright walls 3 at their upper ends after the container has been filled with the product to be packaged, in such a manner that the ends will be in contact with each other along a straight strip, and subsequently heating the strip and/or interpolating an adhesive, after which the wall ends are bonded together by compression. Usually, seal 4 consists of four layers of material on the sides as the result of this manner of bonding, whilst it consists of two layers in its central portion.

The package can be opened by taking hold of it with the fingers near arrows 5, 6 and pulling in the direction of arrows 5, 6. If said pulling takes place with sufficient force, this seal will tear loose, thus opening the package.

Figure 3 and Figure 4 show in perspective view a package according to the invention. The area of seal 4 thereby has a convex V-shape, seen from the engagement portion, so that if the package is opened in accordance with that which has been discussed with regard to the package according to Figures 1 and 2, seal 4 will come loose whilst only a small force is exerted, starting in the point of the V-shape on the upper side of seal 4, and continuing from there to the bottom of the point. Following that, said opening is continued in a controlled manner towards the ends of seal 4.

In these embodiments, the layers of flexible material extend beyond seal 4, thus forming "flaps" 7. Said "flaps" 7 function as an engagement area for opening the package, which is done by engaging the "flaps" 7 with the fingers and pulling in the direction of arrows 5, 6. It

will be apparent that a relatively large force is required thereby, because a long edge of the seal is pulled loose along its entire length in one go. In the variant shown in Figure 4, said flaps are made up of a continuous strip, which extends beyond the seal.

Figure 5 is a side view of an embodiment comprising a V-shaped seal without "flaps" 7. Figure 6 shows another embodiment of a package, wherein seal 4 is made up of a substantially straight strip, and wherein an arched or curved seal portion is provided in the central part, which functions as a starting point for opening the package.

Figures 7, 8, 9 and 10 show further embodiments of a package, now provided with "flaps" 7. Furthermore, various possible embodiments of a seal are shown by way of illustration, wherein the edges of the seal area comprise arched or curved portions and straight edge portions, which include an angle with each other. As is shown in Figure 10, it is possible to combine straight edge portions and curved edge portions. The seal forms which are shown in Figures 7 - 10 are similar in that they are all convex, as a result of which opening will commence at the point located closest to the engagement portion, after which said opening will continue in a controlled manner towards the ends of the seal area. It is also possible to use these seal forms in the embodiments which do not comprise "flaps", as shown in Figures 5 and 6.

The above-described embodiments are to be considered examples of a package according to the invention.

CLAIMS

1. A package of a flexible material which has been formed into an envelope (1), which package comprises an access opening, which is closed by means of a seal (4) which has been formed by bonding together two or more contacting layers of the material in a particular area, which package can be opened by pulling apart two bonded-together layers of material in said area, to which end the flexible material is provided with an engagement portion (7), characterized in that the portion of the seal (4) area that is positioned closest to said engagement portion (7) has a convex edge.

2. A package according to claim 1, characterised in that said convex edge comprises two substantially straight edge portions, which include an angle with each other.

3. A package according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that said convex edge is substantially curved

4. A package according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that said area has substantially the same width along its length.

5. A package according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the width of said area near the engagement portion (7) is smaller than near the edges of said access opening.

6. A package according to any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that said seal (4) is substantially in the form of a stripe.

7. A package according to claim 6, characterised in that said seal (4) is substantially in the form of a V-stripe.

8. A package according to anyone of the preceding claims, characterised in that said flexible material extends beyond said area, seen from the packaged product, and said engagement portion (7) is thereby positioned in said further extending material.

9. A package in according to anyone of the claims 1 - 7, characterised in that said engagement portion is positioned in the part of the package which is intended for enveloping the packaged product.

10. A package according to anyone of the preceding claims, characterised in that said package substantially consists of one piece of flexible material.

11. A method for producing a package of a flexible material, wherein two or more contacting layers of the material are bonded together in a particular area, in such a manner that the package can be opened by pulling apart two bonded layers of material in said area by engaging said flexible material at the location of an engagement portion (7), wherein the part of the area located closest to said engagement portion (7) is provided with a convex edge.

12. A method for packaging a product, wherein the product is enveloped with a flexible material, wherein two or more contacting layers of the material are bonded together in a particular area, in such a manner that the package can be opened by pulling apart two bonded layers of material in said area by engaging said flexible material at the

location of an engagement portion (7), wherein the part of the area located closest to said engagement portion (7) is provided with a convex edge.

13. A method for opening a package of a flexible material, which package is closed by means of a seal (4) which has been formed by bonding together two or more contacting layers of the material in a particular area, wherein the bonded material is pulled loose, starting at a portion of the area where the edge of said area has a convex shape.

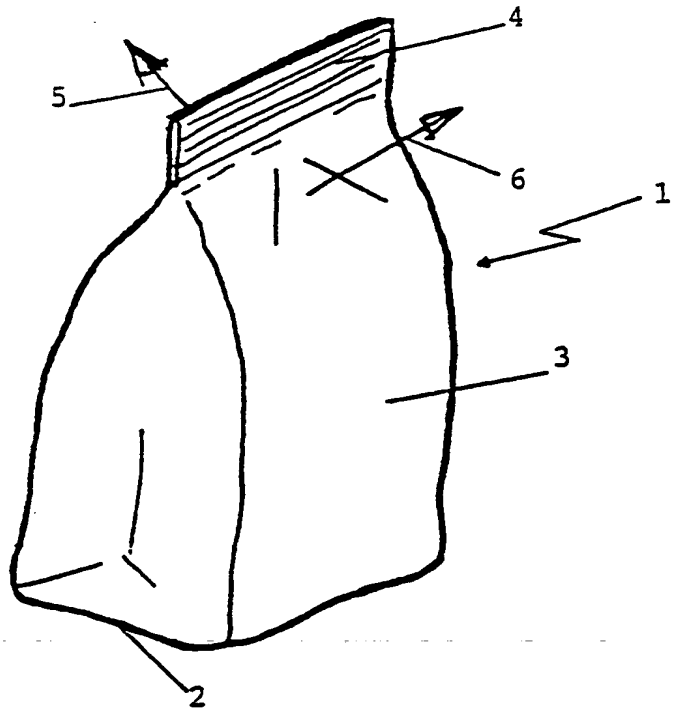

FIG. 1

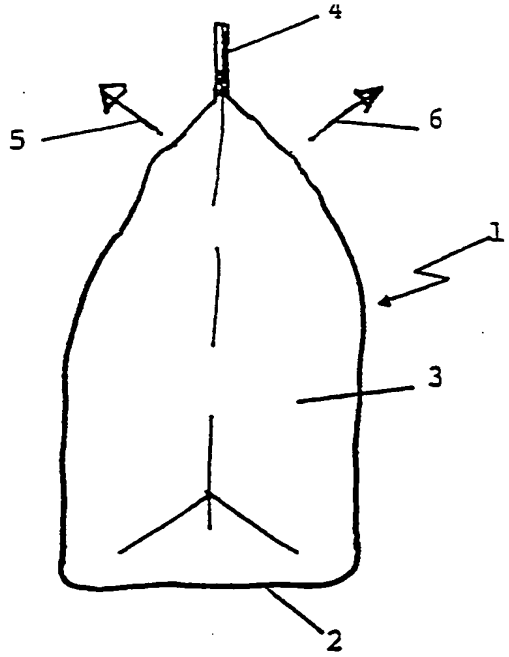

FIG. 2

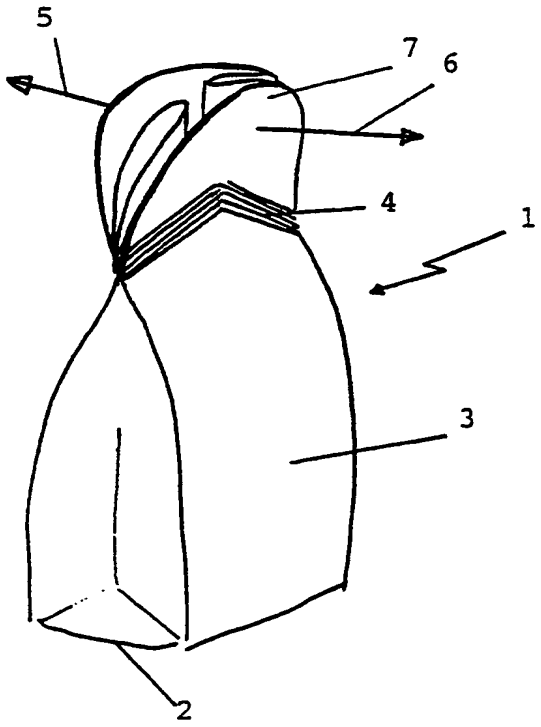

FIG. 3

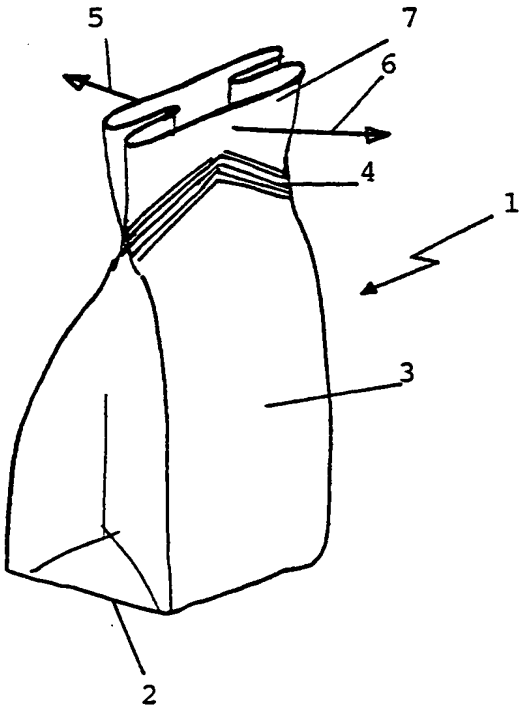

FIG. 4

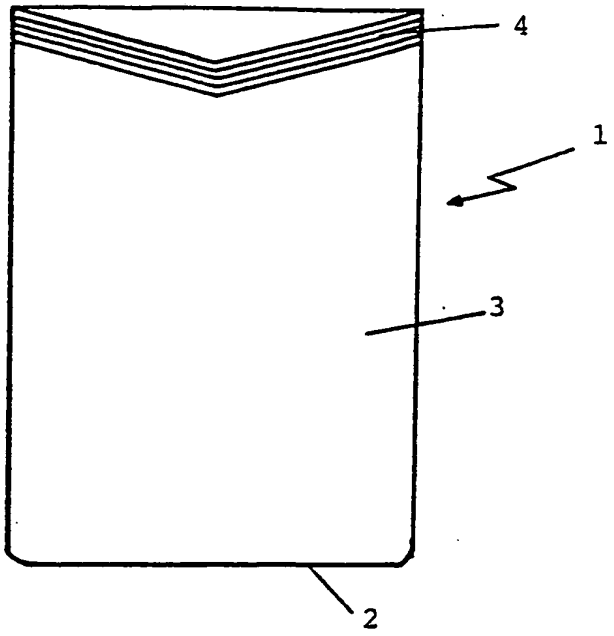

FIG. 5

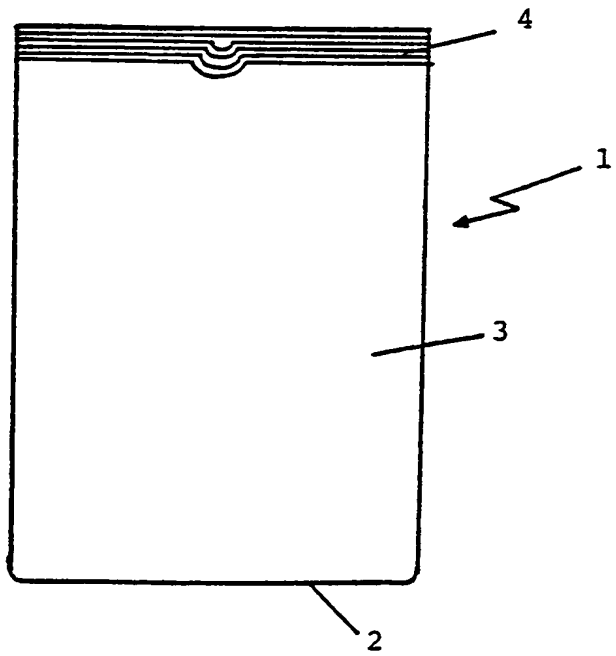

FIG. 6

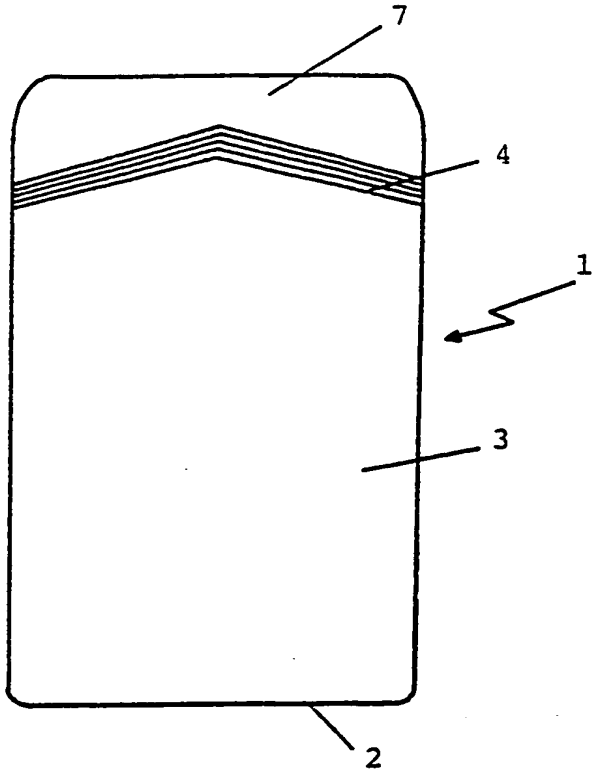

FIG. 7

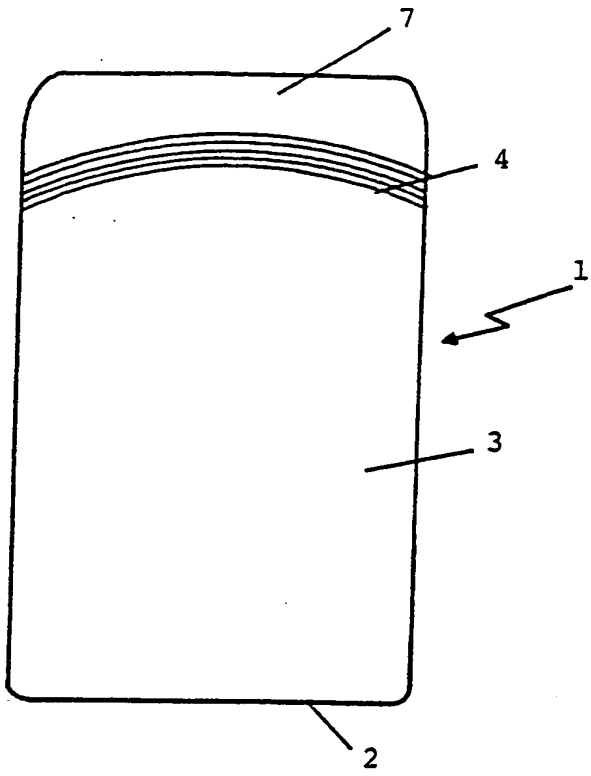

FIG. 8

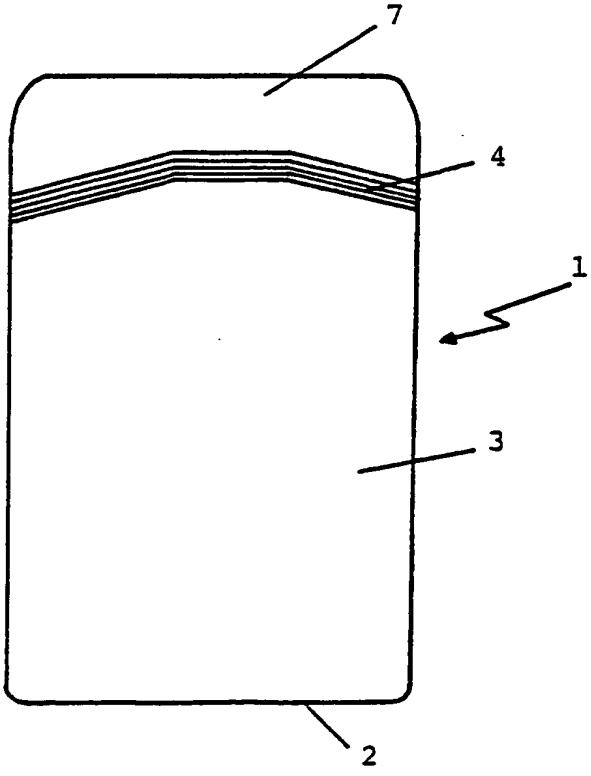

FIG. 9

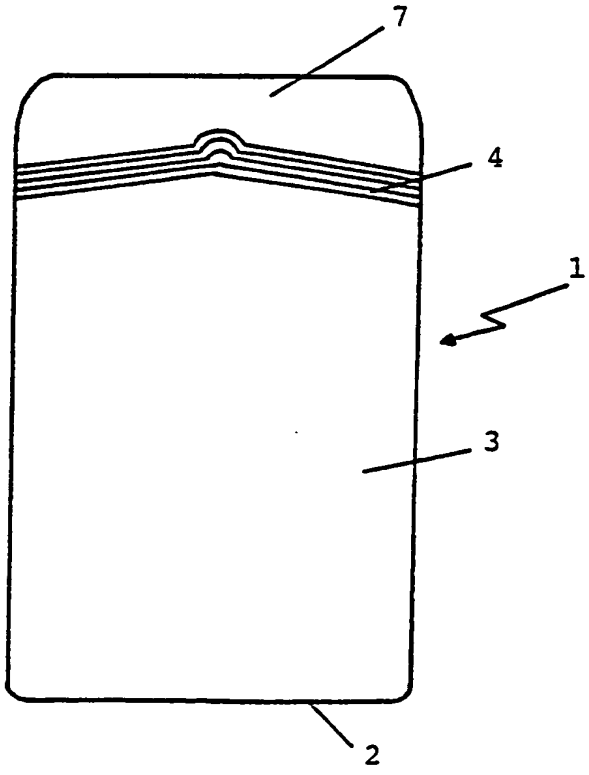

FIG. 10

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

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INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference	FOR FURTHER ACTION	See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416)
V/WZ15		
International application No.	International filing date *(day/month/year)*	Priority date *(day/month/year)*
PCT/EP00/02751	22/03/2000	22/03/1999
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC B65D75/58		
Applicant MARS B.V. et al.		

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.

2. This REPORT consists of a total of 4 sheets, including this cover sheet.

   ☒ This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

   These annexes consist of a total of 10 sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

   - I ☒ Basis of the report
   - II ☐ Priority
   - III ☐ Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability
   - IV ☐ Lack of unity of invention
   - V ☒ Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations suporting such statement
   - VI ☐ Certain documents cited
   - VII ☐ Certain defects in the international application
   - VIII ☐ Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand	Date of completion of this report
12/10/2000	15.06.2001
Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority: European Patent Office D-80298 Munich Tel. +49 89 2399 - 0 Tx: 523656 epmu d Fax: +49 89 2399 - 4465	Authorized officer Lawder, M Telephone No. +49 89 2399 8465

Form PCT/IPEA/409 (cover sheet) (January 1994)

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

International application No. PCT/EP00/02751

I. Basis of the report

1. With regard to the **elements** of the international application *(Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17))*:
Description, pages:

1,3,6,7	with telefax of	05/03/2001		
2,4,5	as received on	21/05/2001	with letter of	21/05/2001

Claims, No.:

1-10	as received on	21/05/2001	with letter of	21/05/2001

Drawings, sheets:

1/3-3/3	as originally filed

2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

   These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language: , which is:

   - ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of the international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).
   - ☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).
   - ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rule 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

   - ☐ contained in the international application in written form.
   - ☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.
   - ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.
   - ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.
   - ☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.
   - ☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.

4. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

- ☐ the description, pages:
- ☐ the claims, Nos.:
- ☐ the drawings, sheets:

5. ☐ This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)):

   (Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.)

6. Additional observations, if necessary:

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. Statement

Novelty (N)	Yes:	Claims	1-10
	No:	Claims	
Inventive step (IS)	Yes:	Claims	1-10
	No:	Claims	
Industrial applicability (IA)	Yes:	Claims	1-10
	No:	Claims	

2. Citations and explanations
   see separate sheet

Item V:

1. Document D1 (EP-A-0 343 629) discloses a package 10 of a flexible material which has been formed into an envelope, which package comprises an access opening 12, which is closed by means of a seal 14 which has been formed by bonding together two or more contacting layers of the material in a particular area, which package can be opened by pulling apart two bonded-together layers of material in said area, to which end the flexible material is provided with an engagement portion 20, and the portion 22 of the seal area that is positioned closest to said engagement portion 20 has a convex edge.

   The subject-matter of claim 1 differs from the package of D1 in that the engagement portion is positioned in the part of the package which is intended for enveloping the packaged product, and that the convex edge is directed inwardly.

   The feature that the convex edge is directed inwardly is not suggested by the available prior art. The subject-matter of claim 1 is therefore new and inventive within the meaning of Article 33(2) and (3) PCT.

1.1 By the same argument, independent method claims 9 and 10 are also new and inventive within the meaning of Article 33(2) and (3) PCT.

1.2 Claims 2-8 are dependent on claim 1 and as such also meet the criteria of the PCT with respect to novelty and inventive step.